



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 1095, An Act Concerning School Resource Officers

Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and members of the Environment Committee:

My name is Manuel Sandoval and I am a New Britain resident, ACLU Smart Justice Leader, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Restorative Justice Practitioner and Prior Violence Prevention Specialist. I'm here in support of S.B. 1095: An Act Concerning School Resource Officers.

Over the past 10 years, I've worked with youth, ages 11 to 24 across Hartford Public Schools. All too often I have witnessed young people traumatized on a regular basis by the SROs and police officers within the school system. This is not to say that SROs are bad people or looking to traumatize our students. However students seeking assistance and are being greeted by the long-lasting effects of trauma because of those wearing the uniforms, along with their engagement practices, are creating trauma in our community. In order to reduce the harm that policing is causing communities of color across the state, Connecticut must reduce the role, responsibilities and presence of police. School resource officers are police, just as much as any other law enforcement staff across the state, and their in-school policing has become a key link in the school-to-prison pipeline.

As a vested adult from communities much like the students here today, I have experienced the adversities and displacement effects that many traumatized youths have experienced within in the schools by SROs. We have become the victims of

systemic and institutionalized trauma created by the very systems meant to nurture and protect the youth.

When police are in school, kids – especially Black and Brown kids – are more likely to be arrested. School police are also disproportionately arresting students with disabilities. Police are five times more likely to arrest Black girls in schools as white girls. While Black students comprise 15 percent of students enrolled in public schools, they account for 31 percent of students referred to or arrested by the police. Since 2001, when Congress and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHA) established the D J. Cohen National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, there has been a huge push to learn more about trauma-informed care in pediatrics and education. Because of this push, it is commonly knowledge that trauma experienced in childhood adversities has pervasive, long-lasting negative effects on its host. Across America, schools are advocating to incorporate trauma-informed care into their schools. However, many are failing to recognize they are the ones creating a majority of the traumatic experiences that students are experiencing. School counselors, behavior techs, nurses, social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists are the right people to address the multitude of issues facing our young people, not an armed police presence. We need entities like Peacebuilders and Our Piece of the Pie because they meet the child where they are and assist them in understanding how to communicate and find their way to success.

Students' safety ,security, and support, shouldn't come from the police but rather from a caring adult who understands their student's needs. Instead, our schools rely on policing and fear tactics meant to keep students in line.

SB 1095 expands the definition of school resource officers to include professionals trained to deliver to students the developmental and behavioral resources they need, and hopefully with a touch of humanity. I urge this committee to support SB

1095 and help to build an educational system that centers the social-emotional well-being of students through care, resources and restoration.

Thank you for hearing my testimony,